




GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

JANUARY 2017 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 1

\$1

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Ann Arbor Housing Commission Administrative Office

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Women's health centers: keep the doors open for everyone

by Maria Hagen
Groundcover Contributor

I have become deeply disturbed by a recent trend in our government, a trend that will only be amplified by the incoming Donald Trump administration. The Republican establishment has long attempted to restrict access to women's health clinics, for fear they might provide abortions. Many of the restrictions placed on these health centers – especially Planned Parenthood – have resulted in the closures of many clinics so that some states only have one clinic that can terminate a problematic pregnancy and as few as two Planned Parenthood clinics that provide referrals and other services statewide.

Regardless of your opinion of abortion, women's health centers are important because of the other services they provide. Planned Parenthood, for example,

provides cancer screenings, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, access to contraception and screenings for domestic and interpersonal violence along with referrals when necessary. They provide care for everyone, regardless of background, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and accept Medicaid patients and those who cannot afford clinic fees.

Moreover, Planned Parenthood and similar clinics work to prevent the need for abortions by giving women (and often men, too) the information they need to practice safe sex. The burden of pregnancies falls largely on women, along with the costs of abortion or of raising a child, thereby making this a women's rights issue. Clinics provide free condoms, and under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) most oral contraceptives have to be covered by insurance without a copay. Oral contraceptives also help reduce the cramping and flow of menstruation for many women, helping them feel better and more productive. For women who struggle with the side-effects of hormonal birth control, these clinics provide intrauterine devices that are effective and don't require as much personal management.

The condoms that the clinics provide also help prevent the spread of STIs such as HIV/AIDS or herpes. Planned Parenthood also provides testing to screen for these infections and the treatment for them, if necessary. A friend recently told me she had to bring her male partner there because he did not know whether or not he was clean. It turned out that he did have an infection, and the clinic provided him treatment services. Too often, this kind of reproductive care is not available at regular community clinics in low-income areas.

At each routine exam for women, these clinics ask about the client's health, including questions about their safety in their relationships. This kind of screening for domestic violence is extremely important. If a client says that she is unsafe at home, she is referred to organizations that specialize in helping people in that situation.

Women's health clinics serve everyone's reproductive and sexual health needs. Planned Parenthood provides information for anyone curious about their sexual health. Men can get tested for STIs as easily as women. Planned Parenthood also provides a safe space for LGBTQI+ people, giving information that these individuals need and never asking them to explain themselves, how they look or questioning their sexuality.

Access to safe and legal abortions has been under debate a great deal in the last few years, especially in politics. Women have been terminating pregnancies for centuries, often with fatal results for themselves. Without access to clinics that provide this procedure, the physical and emotional health of many women is threatened. Women who cannot afford to have children, have no desire to have them or cannot carry a child for health reasons, will be in danger. In the absence of these critical services, many women inevitably will seek out illegal abortion providers or attempt risky self-abortion procedures, greatly increasing the risk of pregnancy-related injury and death.

Forcing a woman to carry a child is an act of violence that will affect that woman's life as long as she lives, even if she doesn't keep the child. At the very least, women who become pregnant through assault, whether rape or incest, should have access to an abortion so that they are not traumatized further. Ohio's "heartbeat bill," which was vetoed in December 2016 by Gov. John Kasich, would have taken that access away from women because many don't know they are pregnant by six weeks – the time when a fetus's heart starts to beat.

According to Julie McKeiver of Planned Parenthood of Michigan (PPMI), "Those with means will always be able to pay their way to accessibility while low-income women will always have fewer options. That is why Planned Parenthood strives to make every reproductive choice available to every woman, and [why] we fight for equal access to health care for everyone!"

Under the ACA, one-third more women have health insurance than previously, and they no longer pay more for their plans than men. With more women covered by insurance, women's health clinics are more viable and able to provide services that are often not covered by local county clinics, often with much shorter waiting periods for appointments.

Despite the important work that women's health centers do, state administrations and Congress have passed legislation, known as TRAP laws, that add costly new regulations that make it difficult for these clinics to stay open. TRAP laws – Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers – are marketed as measures to support women's health, yet they mostly impose burdens on these clinics that other medical facilities are exempt from. Shutting down or burdening such clinics deprives women of care that is vital to their health.

McKeiver says, "Just as the acronym implies, they are intended as a TRAP to force abortion providers to shut down if they cannot meet the new regulations – which, of course, the goal is to design these unnecessary regulations so that they cannot be met. This is a strategy used by anti-choice lawmakers to extremely limit the availability of abortion. Of course, all this does in the long run is create more burdens to care, which disproportionately affect low-income women."

The U.S. Supreme Court decision this summer in the case of *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt* increased the likelihood that these laws will be successfully challenged. This was a factor in Gov. John Kasich's decision to veto Ohio's controversial "heartbeat bill," which would have banned abortion after six weeks.

However, with the incoming Trump administration and a new Supreme Court nominee who is expected to be anti-abortion, it is hard to tell how long the decision of *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt* will be upheld, let alone *Roe v. Wade*. President-elect Trump's pick for head of Health and Human Services, Tom Price, has voiced a strong opposition to federal funds going to Planned Parenthood and has said he wants to dismantle the ACA. For many women, especially those in financially difficult situations, this would mean losing health care that they desperately need.

We have already seen a change in attitude towards women's health care in the attempt by the Ohio legislature to pass the "heartbeat bill" – a victory for women's rights that was quickly followed by a law passed in Ohio banning abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. (The new law does make exemptions for cases of babies conceived through rape or incest, or where the life of the mother is deemed to be at stake.)

The fight to keep women's health centers open will become even harder in the next few years as Republicans, who largely tend to oppose abortion, take control of all three branches of the federal government. Attempts to close these clinics will become more aggressive, and with the ACA under threat as well – along with prejudice against women and the LGBTQI+ community growing – they will be more impotent than ever. To keep these essential services open, donate to Planned Parenthood at ppmi.org, and lobby your representatives in Congress both at the state and federal levels, urging them to oppose more TRAP laws.

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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About those safety pins...



by Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell
Groundcover Contributor

During the Second World War, many Dutch citizens wore safety pins under their collars or on their hems to indicate their resistance to Nazi occupation, their unity and their loyalty to the government of the Netherlands in exile. Seventy-five years later, people in the United Kingdom began wearing safety pins after the Brexit vote to counter the vicious, threatening and divisive language that characterized the political climate before the vote last summer. They were concerned about extending safe presence both to neighbors and to strangers on the street who were refugees or immigrants.

The safety pin is an ordinary symbol of sanctuary for those who are frightened or feel vulnerable to attack. After a most contentious election season in this country, safety pins were donned immediately following the November vote. There are those who take the safety pins seriously; there are those who think they are a frivolous and meaningless fad. I have three safety pin stories to share.

The first involves a young international couple. She is from the U.S.; he is a naturalized citizen whose country of origin is Nicaragua. They have been married for five years; both work in public health, and love to travel.

Recently they were returning from a Thanksgiving trip to Panama and had a way-too-common experience as they re-entered the United States. An immigration official hassled him intensely while asking quite a few inappropriate questions; he couldn't get his hands to stop shaking. Unfortunately, this is a common experience for a number of loyal naturalized citizens no matter what they do for work, how long they have legally been here or how carefully they pay their taxes. In this case, legal counsel recommended that they file a formal complaint. A few days after this incident, his wife reflected to me that she realized she was his safety pin that day, a reliable haven in an unnecessary storm of verbal assault.

The second story involves a group of people who live not far from Wash-tenaw County and was told by Gail Katz, co-founder of WISDOM – Women's Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in Metro-Detroit – came into being in the summer of 2006 through the combined ef-

forts of a Muslim woman, a Jewish woman, a Protestant woman and a Catholic woman. They came together in response to tensions between local Muslim and Jewish communities as war heated up in the Middle East between Israel and Hezbollah. The programs and projects of WISDOM over the past decade have been bold, creative and far-reaching.

Not long ago, Gail Katz was among 40 people from Temple Israel, West Bloomfield, Mich., who traveled to Charleston, S.C. The colony of South Carolina granted freedom of worship to Jews in 1669, and Reform Judaism came into being there in the early 19th century. The wealthiest and largest Jewish community in the colonies was in Charleston.

While visiting there, the folks from Temple Israel came face-to-face with the reality that their ancestors had been slave owners and had fought for the Confederacy. In the way of a safety pin, they recommitted to be steady in their efforts to confront racial injustices and racial barriers. They also met with members of Mother Emanuel AME Church, where Dylann Roof shot and killed nine African American worshippers having Bible study in 2015. As they met, they were given the opportunity to

read words of healing and forgiveness from those at Mother Emanuel. Going forward, the safe welcome they extend broadly will be enriched by their entire experience in Charleston.

The final story takes us to a championship moment in sports this year. LeBron James has been on the cover of Sports Illustrated since the magazine recognized him as 2016 Sportsman of the Year. If you look carefully at the lapel on his jacket you won't see an NBA pin or a Cleveland pin; you will spot instead an everyday safety pin. In a moment that was all about him and the Cavaliers, he used the spotlight to be in solidarity with any and all who sense they may be targeted.

A young wife, a group of Jewish people exploring the fullness of their heritage and an NBA superstar have committed to the power of being people of the safety pin, safety zones for vulnerable others. The Groundcover community has firsthand experience with unfriendly margins and threatened life. Every month our voices in the paper and our willingness to steadily chip away at a big and difficult issue are evidence of our safety pin capacities. The wearing of the pin and the being of the pin are not frivolous nor are they meaningless. They are the vital stuff of inclusive, diverse boundary-crossing community.

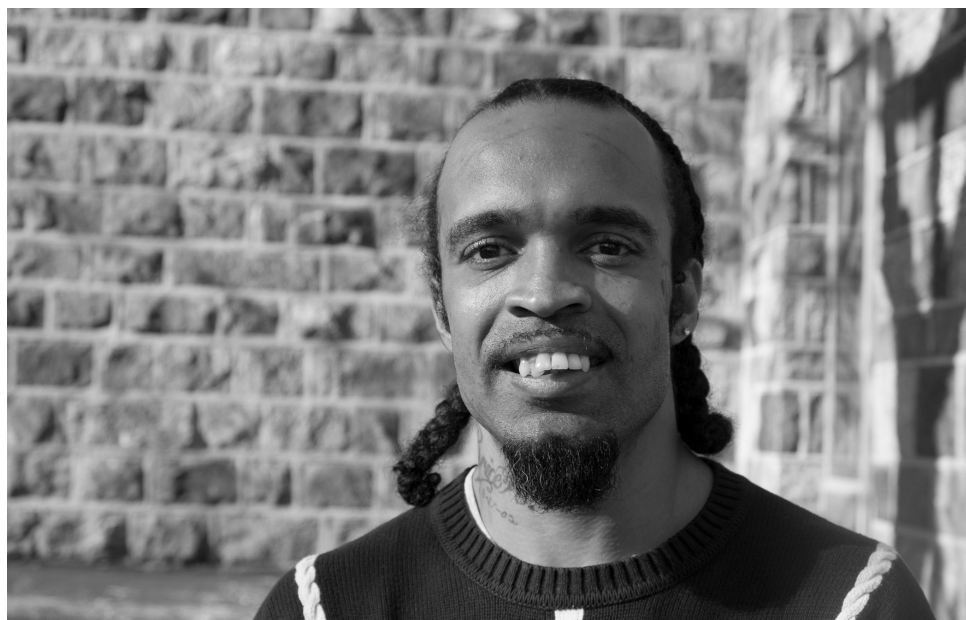
Meet Robert Whitsett

Groundcover Vendor #358
by Susan Beckett
Publisher, Groundcover News

Robert Whitsett came to Groundcover News in Oct. 2016, half-expecting the false assurances that employers wouldn't disqualify him due to his criminal record even though they would later decline him an interview. Luckily for Robert, instead of this two-faced treatment he had received prior, Groundcover gave him the opportunity to become his own employer, as it does everyone who works for this organization.

"They accepted me regardless of my past, unlike other guys who say they will but don't. Groundcover makes the unemployable, employable," Robert said.

A Creole from New Orleans (N.O. is his nickname), Robert matured on the south side of Ypsilanti. He started working young. At the age of 13 he worked with AmeriCorps and at age 14 in a fast food joint. He also got in trouble with the law then for carrying a



Vendor Robert Whitsett emphasizes positive action in his life today.

concealed weapon. He spent the rest of his youth in prison and was released at the age of 19.

Robert quickly got a job at Arby's and met a woman with whom he had a child. The woman tired of him and left, causing Robert to fall apart. He returned to criminal activity and was imprisoned.

While he was incarcerated, 20 of his family members perished in Hurricane Katrina. Due to his long sentence, his parental rights were also terminated despite four years of litigation in hopes of obtaining custody. Two weeks before his release, Robert's mother passed away; he was on the phone with her while she passed. During this period,

Robert felt as if he were living the Biblical passage of Job, Chapter 3.

Robert emphasized the corrections aspect of confinement by the Michigan Department of Corrections. "You've got to be willing to change the way you think to be ready for society, even though the environment you are living in is one where people are being hit in the head with locks, raped by prison guards..." Robert said.

Robert used his 20 years in prison to complete his GED. He also attended Business Management courses for which he received a certificate from Bronze University. Robert acted as a big brother to other inmates, encouraging them and giving them little gifts when he could. He attended religious services of all denominations. He became more appreciative of life and of every letter from the outside, even if it was from a stranger.

"When you have no family, no friends... a single letter is the most valuable thing," Robert mused. "People need love. That's what people forget."

Jailing people because they are too poor to pay court costs

by Angie Martell
Groundcover Contributor

This past year the Michigan Supreme Court announced a series of new court rules that were created to ensure that people are no longer jailed simply because they cannot pay their court costs. The United States Department of Justice has also told local and state courts to avoid practices that disproportionately hurt low-income individuals.

Debtor prisons were outlawed in the United States over 200 years ago and the U.S. Supreme Court made it clear in a 1983 case called *Bearden v. Georgia* that judges must consider whether the defendant has the ability to pay but “willfully” refuses. Yet there have been wide discrepancies in how judges interpret those rulings.

Michigan has had a long-standing problem of debtor’s prisons as the result of pay-or-stay sentencing. For years, many individuals too poor to pay their fines were sent to jail by judges in our state. Court fees, fines and restitution can be exorbitant, often not taking into consideration a person’s financial ability to pay, dooming the person to eventually being non-compliant and sentenced to jail. Some judges went so far as to tell defendants to give up phone service or cigarettes. I once overheard a court official suggest that an individual could sell his blood.

The new court rules will hopefully make the changes desperately needed in the legal system.

According to these new Michigan court rules, a judge is prohibited from sentencing a person to jail for nonpayment without first making a determination whether the person can afford to pay. A court must consider several factors: the person’s employment history, ability to earn and current living expenses.

According to Michigan Court Rule 6.425 (E)(3): “The court cannot sentence a defendant to a term of incarceration nor revoke probation for failure to comply with an order to pay money unless the court finds, on the record, that the defendant is able to comply with the order without manifest hardship and that the defendant has not made a good-faith effort to comply with the order.”

If the court discovers that a person lacks the ability to pay his or her fines, then the court can set up a payment plan or waive all or part of the amount owed. It will be interesting to see if judges throughout the state actually make accommodations for those unable to pay in all cases involving fines or court costs.

Traffic tickets are one source of revenue for local governments, and in some parts of Michigan, police departments have been found to systematically issue trivial fines and court costs to their communities’ poorest citizens to raise revenue. For the impoverished, a ticket is nearly impossible to pay. Unpaid violations can result in suspended licenses or jail time, which can cause someone to lose the job they need as they live paycheck to paycheck or be unable to find work without a vehicle.

Many people don’t know that they are entitled to a hearing for a traffic ticket, especially if they are unable to pay the ticket. It is important to respond in a timely manner to the ticket. Otherwise, a verdict of guilty can be determined for not responding, especially in the case of a civil infraction ticket.

Getting out the cycle of poverty is difficult and we need to end systems that essentially punish people for being poor and force them into further debt. The changes demanded by the Michigan Supreme Court are a good step in that direction.

Without a check – make ‘em laugh

as told to La Shawn Courtwright
Groundcover Vendor #56

(Editor’s note: This is part of a series of investigations into the survival strategies used by people who receive no pay-check or cash assistance. Our thanks to Luke Schaeffer, University of Michigan School of Social Work professor and author of \$2 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America for commissioning these works and generously sharing them with us.)

I’d normally panhandle with someone with a sign. We use catchy, witty, humorous phrases to get people to laugh at whatever we can find to say at that moment. I then put my hat down and people will give because you enter-

tained them. This, too, usually stops the business owners from calling the cops on us.

I’ve worn the same pair of pants for six months before, so, clothing was the least important element of my survival. I slept behind dumpsters, and white-boxed it (a term used for eating out of the trash). I’ve crashed at places where other street people took me – where everyone was doing drugs and all sorts of dealings for the prospect of making a quick buck. I’ve even washed a car before with my shirt off for \$150 bucks for a person of my same sex, although I would never do that normally.

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- 1

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343 S. Fifth Ave., A2, MI 48104
- 2

A2 Dist. Library (Pittsfield)
2359 Oak Valley Dr., A2, MI 48103
- 3

A2 District Library (Westgate)
2503 Jackson Ave, A2, MI 48103
- 4

A2 District Library (Traverwood)
3333 Traverwood Dr., A2, MI 48103
- 5

A2 Dist. Library (Malletts Creek)
3090 E Eisenhower Pkwy, A2 48108
- 6

A2 Center for Indep. Living
3941 Research Park Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48108
S. Fifth Ave., A2, MI 48104
- 7

Bryant Community Center
3 W. Eden Ct, A2, MI 48108
- 8

Michigan Ability Partners
3810 Packard Rd, Suite 260, A2, MI 48108
- 9

Trinity Lutheran Church
1400 Stadium Blvd., A2, MI 48103

Ypsilanti

- 10

Washtenaw County Community Mental Health
555 Townner St, Ypsilanti, MI 48198
- 11

Department of Health and Human Services
555 22 Center St, Ypsilanti, MI 48198
- 12

SOS Community Services
101 S Huron St, Ypsilanti, MI 48197
- 13

Friends in Deed
96 Ecorse Rd, Ypsi, MI 48198
- 14

Ypsi Dist. Library (Whittaker)
5577 Whittaker Rd, Ypsi, MI 48197
- 15

Ypsi Dist. Library (Michigan)
229 West Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, MI 48197
- 16

Ypsi Dist. Library (Superior)
8795 MacArthur Blvd, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

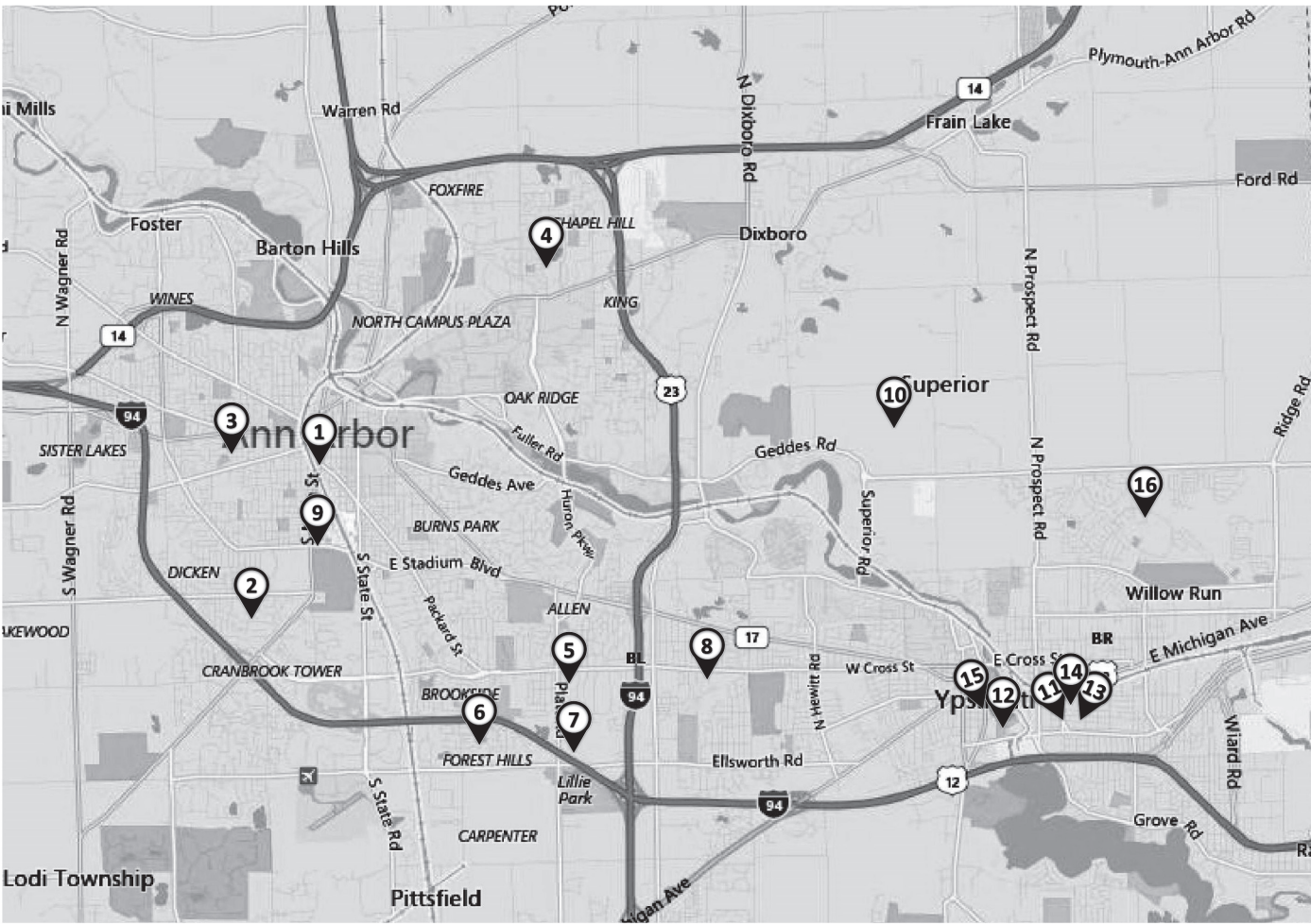
Other locations

- Chelsea District Library
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Milan Public Library
151 Wabash St., Milan, MI 48160
- Dexter District Library
3255 Alpine St., Dexter, MI 48130

Saline District Library
Saline, MI 48176
- Manchester District Library
912 City Rd., Manchester, MI 48158

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January 2017

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331 Thompson Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

February 2017

First Congregational Church (8:30am - 4:00pm)
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608 E William Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

First Baptist Church (8:30am - 4:30pm)
Tuesday & Thursday ONLY
517 E Washington Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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Ann Arbor Housing Commission – subsidized housing support services

by Susan Beckett

The Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) provides desirable housing in Ann Arbor and nearby areas for low-income individuals and families. Strategies to accomplish that have changed through the years, sometimes due to funders' regulations and sometimes to adopt best practices.

AAHC now partners with housing and service providers to build healthy residential communities and promote an atmosphere of pride and responsibility in their more than 378 units at 18 sites all within the city limits. They also administer more than 1600 Section 8 vouchers that recipients can use to for subsidies on privately-owned rental properties. Tenants pay 30 percent of their adjusted income on rent for both the AAHC housing and for vouchers, whether they are project-based or tenant-based, and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) pays the balance of the rent.

Tenants at most of their larger sites receive supportive services from other local non-profits including Avalon, Peace Neighborhood Center (PNC) and Community Action Network (CAN), as well as the Veterans Administration and Washtenaw County Community Mental Health. Case management services to families are offered on an "as-needed basis" and usually are initiated by emergencies such as a DTE shutoff notice or a health crisis. Many AAHC tenants have access to onsite services.



Residency Manager Beth Yaroch advocates for more supportive services at all AAHC sites.

PNC and CAN operate community centers and provide family-oriented services, after-school programs and summer programs for the hundreds of kids that live on AAHC properties. One family that benefited from these services had struggled to pay utility bills and rent even though they lived in an AAHC property. The family's children had persistent behavioral problems. As part of the redevelopment effort, the family started receiving supportive services. Consequently, there are fewer issues with the children now that there is better communication between the parents and school, and crisis-prevention efforts have reduced the frequency of financial emergencies.

Support services are so important that some of the AAHC units are set aside for people who will receive services through another agency, such as Ozone House, which works with youth transitioning out of foster care. Support services are funded by the service-providing agency, not the AAHC, though AAHC staff members pitch in to support tenants even though they don't have the funding to do so.

Implementing a supportive housing approach allows the underlying causes of lease violations to be addressed, thereby improving tenants' quality of life and reducing the costs for other community services. For example, a tenant who moved into Miller Manor in the summer of 2015 had been homeless for many years, had no income and had very serious physical health and substance use issues. When first housed,

see HOUSING, page 9

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Boober Tours continues to boom: a vendor's update

by Kevin Spangler
Groundcover Vendor #307

Great things are happening with Boober. I sold my first big chunk of advertising to The Brown Jug, a popular local brew pub – signs on four pedicabs, and all of them are lighted box signs. I am also delivering food for them and, so far, it has been a hit. After we develop and make sure everything is streamlined we will add the Blue Leprechaun to the food delivery service. After that is fully developed, we will add a beer and liquor delivery service. Preventing driving under the influence (DUI) is very important to me. One DUI citation can be a life-changer.

I have been working with United Way on a budgeting class. It has helped me tremendously; I have been saving money consistently and I have earned a match through the Groundcover matched savings program. I have saved well over \$200 and am receiving an additional \$400. I will be using this towards an electric motor for one of the pedicabs so it works better in the snow and expands our delivery radius.

I have seen a huge change in my life from the learning in this class and meeting one-on-one with my United Way financial counselor. I have decided to organize a United Way budgeting class for my motivational shop. I have 15 spots available and the class schedule is the second and fourth Tuesdays in January and February. If you are interested in making a massive positive change in your life, this seems to me is one of the first places to start to get your life in order – even if you make over \$100k.



Boober Tours advertises and delivers food for the Brown Jug restaurant on their pedicabs.

I am trying to raise money for a match program for people as a reward for them practicing how to manage and save money. Having a solid financial plan will reduce stress and empower you to think bigger and pursue activities that you love versus merely doing what it takes to "get by."

A massive project I will be working on is a Boober app inspired by the Uber model. It is going to bring people together. It is going to help local businesses and create a positive atmosphere around the city. After the model is created and well-established locally, I will expand to other college towns to create second-chance jobs for people in recovery. Just starting the process is going to cost \$25,000. Some people

say that is too much, but to my mind it is the cost of business. What has to be done on a high-quality app takes multiple talented people and a guy to pull it together. I have found that guy – I used to be his waiter at Silvio's organic pizzeria. So now I am putting a plan together in book form to raise money for this Boober application. If you are interested in being a

donor and want to receive a well-conceived plan of how I am going to help the country on a massive scale, contact me (see below).

If my articles inspire you and you have the helping spirit but don't have enough time to help people, you can always help with your dollars. Your donations help people in need. The two things I am trying to raise money for are the matched-savings program that I plan on doing à la Groundcover – save \$200 receive \$400 – and the Boober app. I will be working very hard on these projects and I would like to have at least one of them finished by spring. Thank you for your generous donations and have a happy new year.

My contact information is (734) 686-2087; the Boober Tours website is boobertours.com. I also accept donations through Venmo: send money securely from the Venmo app to @Boober, and please leave a comment on what you would like the donation allocated to.



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			3	5				1
3		5			4		6	2
	6						3	5

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.



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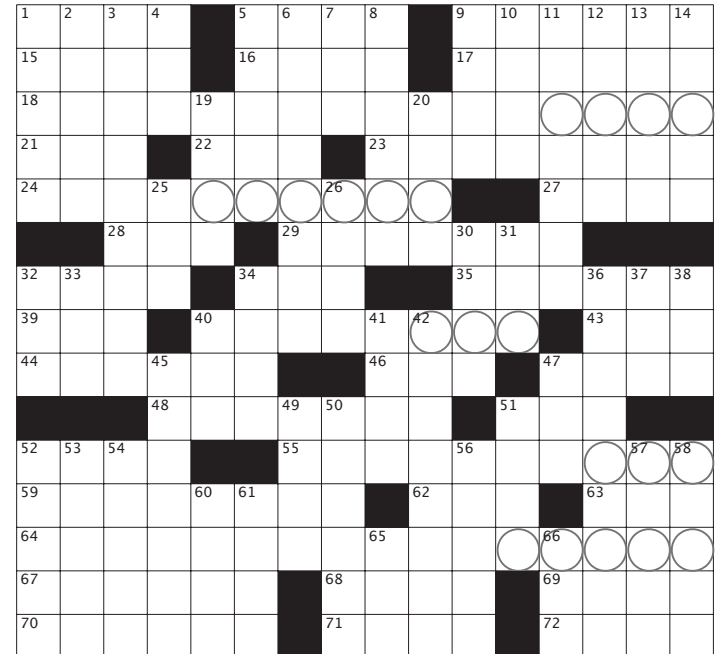
Crafty Folks Peter A. Collins

ACROSS

1. Word of woe
5. Draft picks?
9. Where the Canadian parliament meets
15. "First, ___ harm"
16. One may be drawn by a dirty person
17. Carter follower
18. 1996 Olympic tennis gold medalist
21. Retirement acct.
22. Clemson's league, for short
23. Remnants
24. "Meet the Fockers" star
27. Overly curious
28. Run out of juice
29. Have at
32. With 35-Across, apt title for this puzzle
34. Unaccounted-for soldier designation
35. See 32-Across
39. Leather worker's tool
40. First sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy
43. It has one endpoint
44. Tatted up arm, in slang
46. Trinity part
47. Concur
48. Hudgens of "High School Musical"
51. Cuban cager, briefly?
52. Big wind
55. Spats Columbo protrayer in "Some Like It Hot"
59. Iroquois tribe
62. Place to laze
63. Casual top
64. Mary Richards' upstairs neighbor
67. Noiseless
68. Essential
69. Sleek, slangily
70. Bizet output
71. Parasite partner
72. ___ Mawr

DOWN

1. Wing it
2. Nantes's river
3. Virginia city mentioned in Steely Dan's "My Old School"



© Peter A. Collins (Published via Across Lite)

4. Kind of farm
5. Eastern multipliers
6. Take for one's own (with "to")
7. LAX posting
8. Prepares chocolate, in a way
9. Picked things?
10. Jamboree structure
11. Utilize
12. The Supremes album featuring "You Can't Hurry Love"
13. Merchandise
14. Unsettled
19. Gorge
20. Wang of fashion
25. Ride the pines
26. Post-B.A. exam, for some
30. Words after creep or gang
31. Kareem, once
32. ___ - relief
33. Harry Potter's Hedwig, for one
34. Disposition
36. Pirate's cousin
37. Med tech's milieu
38. Rooster Cogburn had one
40. F.D.R. power project
41. One-time "Put a Tiger in your Tank" sloganeer
42. They might be fare-minded?
45. Heavyweight Holyfield
47. One might have many tips for a piano player
49. Frozen waffle brand
50. Use Google, say
51. Part of YMCA
52. Trunk
53. Square
54. Logician George
56. "The Balcony" playwright
57. Carry across
58. Dovetail joint component
60. Actress Delany
61. Qts. and pts.
65. Sticky stuff
66. Folder flap

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While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

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Sunday school at 10:15 am

Fellowship Hour follows each service

January Community Events – Welcome!

January 1

January 8

January 14

January 16, 23, 30

January 28

Worship Service at 10:00 a.m.

"Go and Do Likewise: Putting LGBT+ Inclusion into Practice" A discussion with U-M Ph.D. anthropology student Benjamin Hollenbach, 11:30 a.m.

German Pretzel Sales, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

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Old Testament class 7-8:30

Blood Drive, 9 a.m.



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Mesothelioma: tragic for sufferers and targeted companies

by Martin Stolzenberg
Groundcover Contributor

I once wrote an essay on “reverse mortgages,” in response to being bombarded by celebrities-of-another-time on TV inviting the viewer “to get with it – fast.” It turned out to be a pretty bad deal for precarious homeowners.

I decided to follow up with another essay, this one on a rare form of lung ailment caused by association with asbestos that eventually suffocates its victim. This snooping around was instigated by the tube’s flood of boring commercials about mesothelioma. There was a faint odor about these commercials, kind of like a used car salesman’s pitch.

These commercials urge anyone who has come within a stone’s throw of asbestos to contact a law firm’s telephone number. Even if the sufferer is dead, surviving family members may be eligible for a lot of dough. I’m used to writing about how big business is ripping off the rest of us. This time the shoe was on the other foot.

It turns out these types of cases go back over 30 years, the longest running mass tort in American history. Once asbestos was identified as a cause of lung cancer,

these tort suits bankrupted more than 100 companies, according to *The New York Times*.

Mesothelioma is a rare disease nowadays because asbestos has been banned for many uses, so only about 3,000 new cases are reported each year, according to the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation Inc.

There is still cause for concern because there are countless buildings erected or renovated between 1930 and 1980 that have asbestos in materials in their buildings. When damaged or old, they disintegrate into a fine dust that can be inhaled and can lead to mesothelioma.

Occupations that have a high risk for this disease include: construction workers, electricians, engineers, machine operators, hair dressers, home inspectors, painters, refinery workers, plumbers, police, railroad workers, sailors, shipyard workers, textile workers, tool makers and welders, among others, as reported by the Cancer Alliance blog.

To top it off, this insidious ailment might not manifest itself for 20 to 50 years, although it might be worsening in the body all that time. With a population of over 300 million, and only

3,000 new cases reported a year recently, the odds of contracting this ailment from inhaling asbestos is .0000001.

However, as part of their bankruptcy agreements those 100 bankrupt companies had to put aside monies in a trust for those who suffered from asbestos exposure and suffered from mesothelioma. It turns out there is now over \$37 billion in that kitty.

This accounts for all the interest in this rather obscure disease. Once the gold rush was on, lawyers sued for large amounts and could generate payments of \$500,000 to \$5 million. Looking for a needle in a haystack, lawyers even made deals with unions to take doctors to employment sites to test employees for asbestos-related diseases.

They were running out of claimants until some sharpies came up with a new approach. All they had to do was find someone who had lung cancer and had been in contact with asbestos. This was not hard to do because just about everyone was in contact with asbestos back in the forties and fifties. And plenty of people had lung cancer.

The number of cases ballooned, with some even bundled into class actions –

they bundle a bunch of cases together and sue for huge amounts. They also sued everyone in sight, even companies that had almost nothing to do with asbestos, like General Electric and Pfizer. These companies would usually settle by referring the matter to an asbestos trust which doled out the settlements.

Bankrupt companies may be starting to fight back. The defendant in one case showed the court that the plaintiff had sued a number of companies saying the same thing. He had claimed “meaningful and credible exposure” to each company’s product. The courts have found this not to be reasonable and that by withholding the fact of multiple suits in the original filing, the plaintiffs had “withheld evidence.” The court then severely reduced the penalty when this omission was discovered.

It’s wrong when companies take advantage of consumers and it’s just as wrong when companies are victimized. Those 100 businesses were forced into bankruptcy by some sleazy lawyers and greedy people. You can bet thousands of individuals lost their jobs because of that. This can’t be right – but that’s the way it is.

Ann Arbor Housing Commission – subsidized housing support services

continued from page 6

her health was so fragile that she would be hospitalized weekly. Ambulance and emergency room costs are huge expenses borne by the community. Over time her health began to stabilize and her substance use decreased, due in part to stable housing. She has not been hospitalized for several months now, the longest period in over a decade. She now receives social security benefits and contributes rent. On days when she feels better, she assists with cleanup after lunch. (Some properties have meal services supplied by outside agencies.)

The AAHC receives most of their operational funding from the federal Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) but they also receive some funding from the City of Ann Arbor (\$340,000 for FY ’17), rent from tenants and grants from local foundations.

Those people now moving into AAHC properties have generally been on the waiting list for five to 10 years. The AAHC voucher and housing waitlist is currently closed and won’t re-open until the current list has cleared. However, the waitlist for four- and five-bedroom units is expected to open in 2017 for large families.

affordablehousingonline.com is a

website that identifies affordable housing opening locally and all across the country. (There are no prior residency requirements for vouchers and after one year of residency in the area where the voucher originated, its recipient can transfer it to any other region.) The AAHC is listed on that site when it has openings. AAHC openings are also posted on the AAHC website and advertised by local non-profits. Only those whose incomes are at or below 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) qualify to obtain a tenant-based voucher or to live in an apartment that has a project-based voucher. An applicant must have legal residency status and not pose a danger to others, and cannot have been evicted from any federal housing program in the past three years.

To stay on the waitlist, the applicant must notify the AAHC of any address or phone number changes so they can be contacted when their name reaches the top of the waitlist. The applicant must respond to the AAHC once each year to indicate continuing interest and to verify information. Once they are notified that they have reached the top of the waitlist, applicants must respond to the AAHC and then fill out an application. The AAHC determines if the applicant is eligible and, if so, the AAHC provides a voucher or an apartment.

A change in HUD policy has resulted in a separate mechanism for units reserved for homeless individuals and families. When such a unit becomes available, they notify Homeless Access for Washtenaw County (HAWC) and HAWC identifies their highest-priority applicant that matches the criteria for that opening. To reach HAWC, call (734) 761-1999.

Other subsidized housing agencies, such as Avalon and Michigan Ability Partners (MAP), used to maintain their own, independent waitlists but now only accept applications through HAWC.

The AAHC is well into a major renovation project for all their units, a top priority for Jennifer Hall, who took over as Executive Director of the agency in 2011. Of the \$46 million secured for renovations thus far, only about \$1.4 million were paid for by various HUD grants. The vast majority of funds came from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, which is an IRS program. They also received funds from the City of Ann Arbor, City of Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, Federal Home Loan Bank and Cinnairre.

As part of an effort to de-concentrate poverty and to support local non-

profits who provide housing for homeless households, 200 of the vouchers administered by AAHC are being converted to project-based vouchers. It is nearly impossible to find properties in Ann Arbor that are affordable, even with vouchers, since no more than 30 percent of income is allowed to go toward rent and the vouchers are limited to the HUD-regulated payment standard. Consequently, most people with vouchers can only find housing in other communities, such as Ypsilanti. Project-based vouchers entitle the recipient to live in a property either owned by the AAHC or other local non-profits like MAP and Avalon, all of which are inside the Ann Arbor city limits and are currently designated for permanent supportive housing projects with the understanding that their rent will consist of 30 percent of their adjusted income.

AAHC was one of 10 Housing Authorities selected for a HUD pilot program to save public housing stock from demolition. To participate, the AAHC has to secure private and public funding to renovate all of those buildings that were considered public housing and has a price tag of \$64 million. The AAHC has secured \$46 million and has applications in for the remaining \$18 million needed. Once the renova-

see HOUSING, page 10

Nicaraguan women push for access to farm land, and prosperity

by José Adán Silva
INSP Contributor

A group of women farmers who organized to fight a centuries-old monopoly over land ownership by men are seeking plots of land to farm in order to contribute to the food security of their families and of the population at large.

Matilde Rocha, vice president of the Federation of Nicaraguan Women Farmers Cooperatives (Femuprocan), told IPS that since the late 1980s, when women trained in the Sandinista revolution organized to form cooperatives, access to land has been one of the movement's main demands.

According to Rocha, as of 1997, the organization has worked in a coordinated manner to fight for recognition of the rights of women farmers not only with regard to agriculture, but also to economic, political and social rights.

Femuprocan, together with 14 other associations, successfully pushed for the 2010 approval of the Fund for the Purchase of Land with Gender Equity for Rural Women Law, known as Law 717. They also contributed to the incorporation of a gender equity focus in the General Law on Cooperatives and to the participation of women in the Municipal Commissions on Food Security and Sovereignty.

"For rural women, land is life, it is vital for the family; land ownership and inputs to make it productive are closely linked to women's economic empowerment, to decision-making about food production, to the preservation of our environment, and to ensuring food security and protecting our native seeds to avoid dependence on genetically modified seeds," said Rocha.

Femuprocan is the only federation in the country solely made up of women

farmers: more than 4,200 members organized in 73 cooperatives in six of the country's departments.

Rocha believes the progress made has been more qualitative than quantitative. In 2010, when they pushed through Law 717, an estimated 1.1 million women lived in rural areas, and most of them owned neither land nor other assets. The law was aimed at giving rural women access to physical possession and legal ownership of land, improving their economic conditions, boosting gender equity, ensuring food security and fighting poverty in the country, estimated at the time at 47 percent.

Data from the Household Survey to Measure Poverty in Nicaragua, published in June by the International Foundation for Global Economic Challenge, indicates that 39 percent of the population was poor in 2015.

The poverty rate in urban areas was 22.1 percent, compared to 58.8 percent in rural areas. According to the international humanitarian organization Oxfam, only 18 percent of the rural women who work on farms in Nicaragua own land, while the rest have to lease it and pay before planting.

"Access to land ownership is a pending demand for 40 percent of the members of Femuprocan, which represents a total of 1,680 women without land," said Rocha.

The struggle for access to land is an uphill battle, but the organization is not giving up.

"In 17 municipalities covered by our federation, 620 women are active in the process of searching for lands for our members. Not only women who have no land, but also women who do are engaged in the process of identifying lands to make them productive, as are

other governmental and non-governmental organizations," she said.

One of the members of the organization told IPS that there has been no political will or economic financing from the state to enforce the law on access to land.

"How many doors have we knocked on, how many offices have we visited to lobby, how many meetings have we held...and the law is still not enforced," said the farmer, who asked to be identified only as Maria, during a trip to Managua.

"The problem is that the entire legal, economic and productive system is still dominated by men, and they see us as threats, more than competition, to their traditional business activities," she said.

Other women's organizations have come from rural areas to the cities to protest that the law on access to land is not being enforced. In May, María Teresa Fernández, who heads the Coordinator of Rural Women, complained in Managua that women who do not own land have to pay up to \$200 to rent one hectare during the growing season.

In addition to having to lease land, the women who belong to the organization have in recent years faced environmental problems such as drought, dust storms, volcanic ash and pests without receiving the benefit of public policies that make bank loans available to deal with these problems.

Six years ago, Law 717 was passed, ordering the creation of a gender equity fund for the purchase of land by rural women. But this fund has not yet been

included in the general budget in order for women to access mortgage credits administered by the state bank, to get their own land, Fernández complained in May.

The Nicaraguan financial system does not grant loans to women farmers who have no legal title to land, a problem that the government has tried to mitigate with social welfare programs such as Zero Hunger, Zero Usury, Roof Plan, Healthy Yards and the Christian Solidarity Programme for food distribution, among others.

However, sociologist Cirilo Otero, director of the non-governmental Centre of Initiatives for Environmental Policies, said there is not enough government support, and stressed to IPS that women's lack of access to land is one of the most serious problems of gender inequality in Nicaragua.

"It is still an outstanding debt by the state towards women farmers," he said.

Nevertheless, data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicates that Nicaragua was one of 17 Latin American countries that met the targets for hunger reduction and improvement in food security in the first 15 years of the century, as part of the Millennium Development Goals.

According to the U.N. agency, between 1990 and 2015, the country reduced the proportion of undernourished people from 54.4 percent to 16.6 percent.

*Courtesy of
Inter Press Service / INSP.ngo*

Ann Arbor Housing Commission

continued from page 9

tions are complete, the support classification for those units will change to project-based vouchers for which the AAHC will receive a higher level of rent subsidy from HUD.

As apartment units have been refurbished or rebuilt, energy efficiency enhancements have been made, resulting in 20 percent lower utility costs for tenants and low energy costs for the community centers in larger developments. Miller Manor is now equipped with a 43-kilowatt solar array.

The AAHC even has a homeownership program for tenants in the voucher program, which includes the project-based voucher program. Essentially, a

tenant can use the voucher to subsidize their mortgage payments instead of subsidizing their rent. The AAHC has nine families that are currently in the homeownership program. Tenants who want to buy a home need to go through a homebuyer program such as that offered by Washtenaw Housing Education Partners (WHEP), which provides free counseling for people thinking of purchasing a home. WHEP can also help families access down payment assistance programs. The intake is done by MSU Extension at (734) 997-1678. The tenant goes through the same process as any other family and must qualify for a private mortgage to purchase a home or qualify for a Habitat for Humanity home.



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Ypsilanti community gathers in solidarity post-Inauguration Day

by Andrew Nixon
Associate Editor

With a new president poised to be sworn into office on January 20, many Americans are feeling trepidation around how their lives will be affected by the new administration. Political protests have become a daily phenomenon since the election, with millions of citizens across the country and around the globe reacting with grief, anger and despair to an election fraught with divisiveness and scandal.

Realizing the importance of getting all hands on deck, some local communities are coming together with renewed resolve to preserve and protect what is dear to them.

Enter **Love Resilience Action Ypsi (LRAY)**. Founded in the immediate wake of Donald Trump's electoral college victory and the nationwide wave of hate crimes and proposed discriminatory policies that ensued, LRAY is hosting a **march through Ypsilanti on January 21** – the day after Inauguration Day – focusing on the strength, love and resilience that we can bring to hard times.

“We wanted to offer a positive alternative to the sadness that many of us are going to feel on Inauguration Day. We want to inaugurate our own vision of an interconnected future; to take this moment to say that we are going to create something, too – something that we can rely on,” said Mariah Zeisberg, Associate Professor of Political Science at U-M and LRAY steering committee member.

“We are gathering with our neighbors so that we can know each other across some of the divisions that separate us; gathering together as specific people so that we can support each other better for the challenges heading our way.”

The march, which seeks to bring together diverse groups – including union organizers, artists, women, teenagers, LGBTQ individuals, the poor, disability communities, senior citizens, people of color and of different faiths, families and immigrants – is about more than solidarity: “It’s also about celebrating the fact that many of us and our neighbors have been living

under domination values for a long time, and yet have managed to live beautiful, courageous and dignified lives. And so we want to hear those stories and learn from each other’s examples,” Zeisberg said.

The march will move through Ypsilanti, showcasing the city’s proud history of resistance. Ypsilanti was an important part of the underground railroad, and played significant roles in the abolitionist and women’s rights movements. Participants in the march will have the opportunity to witness historic places throughout the city where a variety of civil rights victories took place. The march will culminate with a “theatrical inauguration” celebrating the community’s vitality.

Similar events will take place in Ann Arbor concurrently.

LRAY views the march as a stepping stone for a larger vision of strengthening community power in uncertain times.

“One of the main goals of this coming together is to form connections to support resilience in the community, and to create a web of belonging between us. Because sometimes, maybe somebody would get hurt or targeted, and their neighbor right down the street would have the perfect resource for helping them out, and would want to, but they don’t know what the need is, because there’s not the connection there. But if we’re connected with one another, then it makes it possible for folks who have something to give, to give in an easy



way, and folks who have a need, to get that need met in an easy way. We want to create a web of belonging that’s so strong that the most powerful storm can blow through and it won’t break us apart,” Zeisberg said. Among LRAY’s several initiatives going forward is an oral history project to gather stories of resilience from neighbors that can be shared amongst one another. LRAY also seeks an online presence, using social media to foster community interconnectivity and to foster political action, including voting in the midterm elections and political education about the challenges ahead.

With new political bombshells dropping daily, it is easy to become fixated on national and global news and forget the needs of the people around us. That’s why, Zeisberg said, “We’re not addressing Donald Trump; we’re addressing one another, because we think that the

power to address this situation is in our hands, and we want to prepare ourselves.”

LRAY organizers are decidedly hopeful, despite the gravity of the challenges that America faces. As Desirae Simmons, also on LRAY’s steering committee, said, “The needs of one in our community are the needs of us all. I can’t wait to see where all this energy leads us!”

The **Ypsi March for Love, Resilience, and Action** will commence at **1 p.m. on January 21**, with a theatrical inauguration and resource fair/gathering of community power to follow. For more information, to get details as they become available or to join forces in organizing this event, visit facebook.com/lovesilienceactionypsi, or send an email to LoveResilienceAction.Ypsi@gmail.com.

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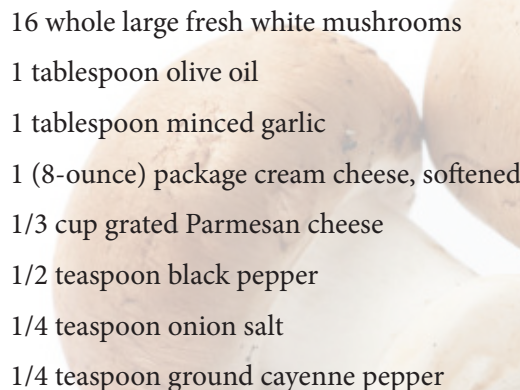
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Ingredients:



16 whole large fresh white mushrooms
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon onion salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
Clean mushrooms and carefully break off stems.
Chop stems to extremely fine.



Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat.

Add garlic and chopped mushroom stems to skillet and fry until moisture has disappeared.

Stir frequently so garlic does not burn.

Allow to cool.

Combine remaining ingredients (except mushroom caps!) with garlic and mushrooms mixture.

Using a small spoon, fill each mushroom cap with a generous amount of stuffing. Place mushrooms on prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 20 minutes or until mushrooms are piping-hot and liquid forms under the caps.

Serve immediately.



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Any resolutions for you?

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less annoying.

Ha! Good luck with that!

I know, with all
my energy I can be
difficult at times...

Difficult?!? You're bouncing
off the walls an hour before
the sun comes up!

Which is why I'm resolving
to control my excitement
each new day.

Well, it's natural and healthy to
look forward to each new day.
Your annoying qualities arise
when you don't channel your
excitement. Make sense?

Sorta. Kinda. We'll see.